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SUBJECT: EMBASSY CONCURRENCE FOR FY09 AFRICOM 1206 MARITIME
SECURITY PROPOSAL

¶1. Embassy Nairobi has reviewed and supports AFRICOM's proposal to help the Kenyan Navy build its maritime capacity to counter the threat posed by terrorist organizations operating from Somalia.

¶2. Kenya's naval capacity has always been weak, and Kenya's overall security has suffered as a result: drug and human trafficking, illegal fishing, and smuggling are all-too-common occurrences. More worryingly, Islamic militants fighting in Somalia -- who have already demonstrated links with al Qaida -- can easily use Kenya's coastal areas to transport equipment, weapons, and personnel. Kenyan security forces on land have interdicted weapons shipments with the assistance of intelligence and specially trained forces. Unfortunately, the Kenyan navy has no real capacity to do this at sea. The navy does not have enough patrol boats to cover its coastal waters, existing boats are in need of repair, and there is little to no awareness of maritime traffic patterns that could facilitate effective interdictions.

¶3. The timing of this proposal is critical given the recent spike in piracy attacks against commercial and passenger ships. Senior Kenyan defense officials believe that the pirates will establish links with terrorist organizations like al Shabaab and al Qaida in the not-too-distant future. While the Government of Kenya has in the past neglected the development of its naval service, the navy's glaring deficiencies have come under the spotlight during the recent spate of piracy attacks. Kenyan government officials have expressed to us in a number of fora their desire to fast-track the development of their navy. The Kenyan navy is doing the best it can with what it has -- even if it means mounting outdated G-3 rifles to the gunwales of its patrol boats. Given the nature of the threat, however, these efforts will not be enough.

¶4. The 1206 proposal aims to provide basic training, equipment, and infrastructure improvement to help the Kenyan navy extend its reach, improve its skills, and increase its operational tempo. The basic improvement in Kenya's maritime capacity should have a cascading beneficial effect in areas like smuggling and drug/human trafficking. However, the most crucial benefits will accrue when Kenya's navy is able to deny al Shabaab and al Qaida-affiliated militants the freedom to operate in Kenya's coastal waters.
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